

Youth Speaks winners overcome their nerves

by Aaron Carpenter

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OVERCOMING pre-performance nerves and a last-minute replacement saw Grammar and the Elizabeth College take home the top prizes at yesterday's Rotary Youth Speaks competition.

The annual competition, which is sponsored by Mourant Ozannes and staged at St James, saw pupils from Grammar, Elizabeth College and La Mare de Carteret High compete for the Raymond Falla Memorial Trophies.

Each three-person team had a fixed amount of time in which to present their case, before answering questions about their chosen topic from the judging panel, headed by Mourant Ozannes' Jessica Roland.

Grammar's senior team of chairman Hannah Ogier, speaker Pieter Durman and vote of thanks Lauren Guille, all 16, won the overall prize with their topic 'How to Solve a Problem Like Mary'.

'We were looking at the nativity and how people cope with not getting the parts they wanted, and then more widely at how people cope with disappointment later in life,' said Pieter.

Hannah said: 'I was so nervous



Seated, left to right: The Grammar School senior team of Pieter Durman, Hannah Ogier and Lauren Guille. Standing, Elizabeth College's intermediate team of Jack Cummins, Alex Varley, Isaac Powers with president of the Rotary Club Brian Acton.
(Picture by Adrian Miller, 17263322)

beforehand, but taking part gives you a real feeling of achievement.'

The team will now take part in the district final in Taunton on Saturday 11 March, where they will compete for a place in the

national final.

And they said sharing the stage with new teams would be 'a great experience'.

'Part of our speech was that success is never final, so we will have

plenty to work on before then,' Lauren added.

Elizabeth College pupils Jack Cummins, 14, Isaac Powers, 14, and Alex Varley, 15, won the intermediate class for Years 10 and 11.

They used a fictional supervillain to personify many people's pessimistic outlook for the year ahead.

'We had the idea of trying to be positive in 2017, after 2016 was so renowned by everyone as being so awful,' said Isaac. 'We used Doctor Doom to capture this negativity and turn it into a person, so we can relate and understand it.'

However, they also had to overcome a last-minute change in personnel, with Jack stepping in as chairman only yesterday morning.

'It has been a rollercoaster as we had to write a whole new script, but it worked out in the end,' they said.

Chairman of the adjudicators Jessica Roland said it had been 'very difficult' to split the teams and that some 'fascinating topics' had been presented.

Rotary Club president Brian Acton added his thanks to everyone involved, commending the students for their performances and Mourant Ozannes for their ongoing sponsorship.